

# U.S. OFFICIALS FEAR SPY RING IN NAVY PIERCED RADIO LINK

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"Whitworth was the biggest deal of them all."

The significance of the material, the officials said, is that it gave the Soviet Union an opportunity to decipher coded communications arriving at ships and bases where Mr. Whitworth was stationed.

## Information Termed 'Gold Mine'

An intelligence source termed these messages a potential "gold mine" to Soviet analysts because they would provide insights into all aspects of the Navy, from mundane maintenance schedules to sensitive reports on the performance of weapons and ships in training exercises.

"Any time you can get into the communications stream of a country, there's an enormous amount you can learn," said one intelligence source. "You can find out things about people, details of communications, readiness, weaknesses in aircrafts. The potential is high."

The officials believe so far that the information they say Mr. Walker and his associates provided the Soviet Union would not allow Soviet analysts to crack codes now used by the Navy because the coding machines have been changed and because the key lists for each of its facilities change each day. Officials said other changes, which they would not disclose, have also been made.

Additionally, because of the way the Navy communicates, the key lists believed provided to the Soviet Union would only decode communications for the base or ship from which they were taken.

At a news conference last month, Adm. James D. Watkins, the Chief of Naval Operations, said the suspected activities of the spy ring caused "very serious damage," the most serious of which involved communications. He said the Navy was assuming the Soviet Union had access to the communications systems the Walkers and their cohorts worked on.

Neither Mr. Walker nor Mr. Whitworth have cooperated with prosecutors, so far frustrating efforts to make a full assessment of the damage caused.

## A Friend of John Walker

Mr. Whitworth, who once boasted in a letter that he worked at "the heart of Naval communications" was a close friend of Mr. Walker and the Government has charged that he was recruited into the spy ring by Mr. Walker as early as 1975 and was paid at least \$328,000 for secret information.

Officials said Mr. Whitworth began passing information to Soviet agents in the mid-1970's, when the Navy was converting its communications from high frequency radio transmissions to transmissions via satellite.

Radio communications by satellite are protected in at least three ways, the

officials said.

First, they said, the frequencies used to broadcast are kept secret and cannot be easily discerned. Additionally, the broadcasts are transmitted in code, and cannot be deciphered, they said, without both a code machine and the cryptographic key list, which is changed regularly.

In 1968, North Korea captured the Pueblo, a Navy spy ship with a wealth of communications equipment aboard. Some of the ship's encryption machines were passed to the Soviet Union, intelligence officials say.

The service chose not to replace these because they could not be used to decipher codes without both the frequencies over which communications are transmitted and the key lists, the officials said.

## Cost of Replacement High

An intelligence source said another reason for not immediately replacing them was the high cost of changing such machines throughout the Navy.

The officials say that if the Soviet Union knew the frequencies over which coded communications were being broadcast from satellites, it could station a trawler nearby and record the coded traffic. Later, with the key lists and machines, the code could be broken.

The Federal indictment said that Mr. Whitworth would "accumulate" key lists and key cards over a period of time before turning them over to Mr. Walker.

On several occasions, the material believed provided by Mr. Whitworth was so important to the Soviet Union that they sent agents to the Far East to pick them up immediately from Mr. Walker, the authorities say.

## Trip to Philippines

According to a Federal complaint filed in California, Mr. Walker flew to the Philippines between Aug. 12 and 15 where the U.S.S. Constellation was making a port call. After a meeting with Mr. Whitworth, who was then stationed aboard the Constellation, "Walker rendezvoused with his Soviet contact on August 16." The dates of the meetings were taken from notes kept by Mr. Walker in his home, the complaint said.

An intelligence source said the timing of this exchange is significant because it shows that the Soviet agents felt the need to make immediate use of material, presumed to be key lists. "They were not doing that just to get something to research," the source said. "They're getting it because they want to use it immediately. They were clearly trying mount a major effort to read United States communications. There's no other reason to try to get that kind of access."

The F.B.I. has concluded that Mr. Whitworth was the author of several anonymous letters to its offices in San Francisco that offered to expose an espionage operation in exchange for complete immunity from prosecution. In

## Aides Say the Security Breach Involved Secret Messages Broadcast by Satellite

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 13 — Senior intelligence officials and Congressional sources say they believe the purported Navy spy ring gave the Soviet Union years of access to the Navy's satellite communications network, which since the mid-1970's has transmitted virtually all of the service's sensitive messages.

While the initial focus of the investigation was on John A. Walker Jr., a retired Navy warrant officer from Norfolk, Va., the officials now believe the material they think was provided by another suspect, Jerry A. Whitworth, was a more damaging security breach.

The officials said that with the material, called "key lists," that they think was provided by Mr. Whitworth, a Navy communications specialist until 1983, the Soviet Union was able to make use of encryption machines taken from the American spy ship Pueblo in 1968 to read coded traffic. The officials said the Navy continued to use the same type of coding machines taken from the Pueblo well into the 1970's on the assumption that the Soviet Union could not obtain the key lists necessary to use them.

## 'Whitworth Was the Biggest Deal'

The officials also provided details of the Walker case that go well beyond earlier public statements by the Navy about the extent to which the service's communications are thought to have been compromised by the purported espionage operation. The assessment is based on an analysis of documents and handwritten notes seized from the homes of Mr. Walker and Mr. Whitworth.

"What they got from Whitworth is really important, far more important than the military has been willing to admit," said a member of Congress who has attended classified briefings on the case. A senior intelligence official involved in the investigation confirmed that assessment, saying:

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the first of these, signed only with the initials R.U.S., the correspondent identifies the importance of the material involved by saying "he has passed top secret cryptographic keylists for military communications and other intelligence information," the complaint said.

Also seized at Mr. Walker's house were handwritten notes, some with Mr. Whitworth's fingerprints on them, which "contain sensitive or classified information describing secure Navy communications systems," the complaint said.

An inventory of material seized from Mr. Walker said he kept a "tactical satellite communications systems manual" in the top shelf of the right book case of his home in Norfolk's Ocean View section.

Mr. Whitworth served in the Navy for 23 years. He was trained in satellite communications at the Army Communications School in Fort Monmouth, N.J., according to the Federal indictment. In 1975, he became a chief petty officer in charge of the satellite communications division at the Navy's base in Diego Garcia. A year later, he was transferred to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Constellation and was responsible for "all communications systems, including satellite communications," the indictment said.

From there he went to U.S.S. Niagara Falls, another aircraft carrier, for one year.

From 1979 to 1982, he was stationed at the Alameda Naval Air Station, one of the nation's larger Navy bases. His title was Message Center Chief and he "had access to virtually all documents and secure information" at the base's communications center.